

# **Schinnen Safe Rider - Motorcycle Safety**

## **RIDING IN THE RAIN**

April. It's not the perfect riding weather, you don't care. For you, the motorcycle riding season has begun and you're ready to hit the open road. Before you do, stop and think about the two main challenges you're about to face. April showers and the wet and flooded streets they bring, coupled with your need to knock the rust off your wet-weather driving skills. One fact holds true, basic driving skills deteriorate over the non-riding season. Simply by taking some time to refresh your basic rider skills and by mentally reviewing the wet-riding techniques you've learned, you will ensure yourself a safe April start to the riding season.

At your first opportunity to drive on wet roads, find a large open paved area and test your braking ability for stopping distance. Wet surfaces will be more slippery than dry surfaces, and some surfaces are more slippery than others. This will undoubtedly increase the distance you need to stop your motorcycle safely. Also, leaning into curves must be done with a little more finesse and caution, and with less lean and speed than on dry surfaces. Once on the road, look at the surface and ask yourself, does this surface condition provide adequate grip or is it old and worn with an inconsistent surface material offering less grip? Is it asphalt, cement and cobble stone? The surface condition and material makes a big difference in your ability to lean into curves and stop quickly. When driving in a wet curve, avoid braking as much as possible. If you must brake, try to get the bike upright and going straight first.

Be aware that some surfaces offer only "average" grip when dry, and little to no grip when wet. It helps to know which is which before you find out the hard way. Surfaces with minimal grip include: metal manhole covers; white lines and road markings; tar seams; polished and worn road surfaces; leaves, dirt and gravel on the roadway, and of course, oily surfaces.

A good general rule is to treat any shiny patch on the road as slippery and to avoid it if possible. Also, avoid places where accumulation of oil and grease is most common: between the wheels tracks at traffic lights or stop signs and on the outside portion of a lane in left and right hand turns, and at traffic circles. Generally, roads will be the most slippery just after the start of a rain following long periods of dry weather.

Finally, watch out for the accumulation of surface water beyond the norm! Expect flooding and the slight possibility of aquaplaning on standing surface water after a storm. Deep water indicators, such as, surface mirror effect, puddles along sides on the road or areas where curbs disappears will give you indications of how deep the water might be, so keep an eye out for these situations. As a general matter of course, you should avoid riding through puddles as they may conceal potholes or other dangerous debris.

The name of the game while riding in the wet is compromise, and the key to safe riding is smooth operations. Compromise your perfect riding plan by slowing down and taking advantage of areas with good grip indicators, while always using smooth control inputs to increase your traction and road surface grip. Maximizing your margin of safety will ensure you keep the rubber-side down and your planned ride safe.

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